DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 535 CS 008 213

AUTHOR Chase, Nancy D.
TITLE Reader Response Techniques for Teaching Secondary and Post-Secondary Reading. College Reading and Learning Assistance Technical Report 85-07.
INSTITUTION Georgia State Univ., Atlanta. Div. of Developmental Studies.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Comparative Analysis; *Critical Reading; Critical Thinking; Peer Evaluation; Postsecondary Education; Prior Learning; *Reader Response; Reader Text Relationship; *Reading Instruction; Reading Processes; Schemata (Cognition); Secondary Education; *Teaching Methods; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a five-step technique for secondary and postsecondary reading instruction, compatible with reader response theory, and addressing the need for academically underprepared students to experience the validation of their personal responses to texts. The first step involves identifying prior knowledge and opinions before reading the text and listing remembered information and reactions after reading the text. The second step involves the organization and synthesis of the lists generated in the identification stage. Students corroborate their individual reactions in small peer groups, outlining or mapping key issues and supporting ideas. The third step involves expressing, in which students consolidate the views of their peers with their own views by sharing their maps or outlines, or exchanging for critique two-page response papers. The fourth step involves analyzing, as the teacher fills in the "gaps" of information or logic by providing, for example, the socio-historical context in which the text was written, or providing similar works by other authors for comparison and contrast. In the final step, evaluating, students react to the global issues and hypothetical situations originally discussed in prereading activities in light of their experience with the text. They evaluate their previous beliefs and opinions, and infer how the author and others in differing interpretive communities would react to these issues and situations. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263535

College Reading and Learning Assistance

Technical Report 85-07

Reader Response Techniques for Teaching Secondary and Post-Secondary Reading

Nancy D. Chase

Georgia State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

November 1985

Georgia State University

CS008 213

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Norman A. Stahl

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Reader Response Techniques

for Teaching Secondary and Post-Secondary Reading

Many students entering college expect challenges and successes similar to high school. To the contrary, many college freshmen realize their academic inadequacies and find themselves taking post-secondary courses in reading. Both secondary and post-secondary instructors face the challenge, and sometimes frustration, of helping these students "make meaning" from texts that are confusing, boring, intimidating, and at the very least, unfamiliar to them. It is important for academically under-prepared students, who typically lack scope, flexibility, and self-confidence in reading and writing, to experience the validation of their personal responses to texts via methods grounded in theories of reader response criticism.

In recent years literary criticism has expanded its scholarly turf to include more than the analysis and evaluation of individual texts deemed literary. Many literary critics are now directing their attention to theoretical questions about the reading process in general. Their answers to these questions take the form of assertions and models about how readers make meaning from texts. Recently, more and more reading and writing teachers are scrutinizing reader response theory in search of implications for classroom practice.

What does reader response theory offer reading teachers? According to reader response assertions, text meaning involves

the interaction of the reader's schema (prior knowledge and experience) with the structure and content of the text (Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1980: Iser, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978). Because every reader's schema is culturally, and even individually unique, it follows that each reader's understanding of a text may be slightly different, and that subsequent readings of a text may also yield different meanings. Thus, texts have various interpretations, but initially are understood in accordance with the reader's interpretive community, schema, and purpose for reading (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1980). These assumptions are generally known and accepted by most reading professionals. What is less obvious, however, is how these assumptions are translated into instruction.

While idiosyncratic interpretations of text are desirable for some purposes, students must learn to expand their understandings of texts from the idiosyncratic perspective (involving personal responses) to understanding the text from the perspective of others (i.e., authors' intentions, scholars' opinions, teachers' expectations). Comprehension of texts based on an ever widening frame of reference is difficult, but imperative. Considering that academically underprepared students typically lack the experience of dealing with texts on anything but an idiosyncratic level, it stands to reason that reading comprehension instruction should begin at the idiosyncratic level, and proceed from personal to other perspectives comparing and contrasting personal beliefs and beliefs of others. It is assumed that students will not comprehend the interpretations of others until

they perceive those objective meanings in relationship to their personal meaning.

In efforts to apply reader response principles to classroom practice, Chase and Hynd (1985) developed a five-step technique for secondary and post-secondary reading instruction compatible with reader response theory and applicable to both narrative and expository texts. The first three steps deal with understanding the text in terms of the reader's own interpretive community, while the last two steps deal with understanding the text in terms of other frames of reference.

Understanding One's Own Interpretive Community

STEP ONE: IDENTIFYING

A) Before reading, the student accesses his/her own opinions and knowledge of the subject matter or issues that will be encountered in the text through prereading activities. Such activities may include reacting to teacher-made lists of controversial issues and topics related to text content, or generating solutions to hypothetical problems related to text's subject ("What would you do if ..."). Another prereading activity might involve the teacher describing a dilemma derived from text content and asking students to assume the role of someone in such a crisis. For instance, for a psychology chapter on stress students may be asked to describe their feelings if put in the situation of losing a job, or experiencing the death of a loved one.

B) After reading the text, the student is asked to make a

list without referring to the text of all s/he can remember about the selection and all immediate reactions. Teachers may want to time this activity in order to emphasize the necessity for spontaneous, "gut" reactions and recall.

STEP TWO: STRUCTURING

This step involves the organization and synthesis of the lists students generated in the identification stage. In this step, students corroborate their individual reactions with the reactions of their peers by working in small groups or with partners. Students may make outlines or maps, for instance, which emphasize the structuring of ideas into the superordinate and subordinate. They may choose several key issues and organize the supportive details to those issues, or, in narratives, cite examples that reveal the personalities of significant characters. Rereading of the text for verification and validation occurs in this stage, and students may also be asked at this time to make lists of unfamiliar or important words in the text.

STEP THREE: EXPRESSING

In this stage, students are required to consolidate the views of their peers with their own personal views regarding the texts through discussion and subsequently, in writing.

A) Individual students or groups may be asked to put the lists, outlines, maps or diagrams generated in the structuring stage on the board and explain them to the class. If time permits, stencils of students' work may be made, distributed and

discussed. The goal of the discussion is to allow students to verbalize their responses generated in the first two stages. Teachers should refrain from correcting inaccuracies, but may point out differences or inconsistencies among or within student responses. Teachers should also refrain from adding to student reactions at this time, and concentrate totally upon giving positive comments to facilitate students' verbalness about the text. In other words, at this stage, the amount of response is more important than the accuracy of response.

B) After students have discussed their recall of the text and their reactions, they are asked to write a two-page response paper, either stating what they feel to be the "meaning" of the text, or taking a stand with regard to an issue related to the text. Students are instructed not only to use quotes and specific examples from the given text, but are asked to incorporate relevant personal experiences and information from other sources known to them (previous reading, t.v., movies, historical-cultural events). When complete, response papers are exchanged and shared in class, with each student critiquing another's paper either verbally or in writing. Critiquing involves (1) restating the main points of the response paper, (2) listing strengths (e.g., appropriate use of quotes and text details, clarity of thought regarding text, etc.), and (3) listing weaknesses (e.g., inaccurate information from the text, unclear relationship of text to a cited personal experience, illogical arguments). If critiquing is done orally, the instructor is to guide the discussion by asking students to clarify points, or by posing

rhetorical questions to students. Again, teachers should refrain from answering questions about text meaning or correcting students' oversights.

Understanding Other Interpretive Communities

STEP FOUR: ANALYZING

In this step, teachers assume a more directive role in teaching the text. Having encouraged students to generate, articulate, and examine their personal and peer responses to the text in steps one through three, teachers now fill in the "gaps" of information or logic; gaps revealed in the previous three steps. The context in which the text was written may be presented so that students may understand the author's point of view or the socio-historical significance of the topic. The works of other authors or experts who have written on similar topics are compared and contrasted to the text, and other ideas (i.e., the ideas of literary critics or scholars' research) about what is important in the text are compared with the students' ideas. Rereading the text again takes place in this stage, and the teacher can emphasize style, use of figurative language or content-specific language, or other important elements that may have been overlooked by the student.

STEP FIVE: EVALUATING

In this final step, students are asked to react to the global issues and hypothetical situations originally discussed in prereading activities in light of their experiences with the

text. Not only are they to evaluate their previous beliefs and opinions, but they are also asked to infer how the author or others in differing interpretive communities would react to these issues and situations.

This five-step procedure has been successful in improving the comprehension of many students having academic difficulty because it demands that students go beyond their personal responses to consider the interpretive communities of others by connecting what is familiar to them with what is not familiar. Developing reader response activities in the classroom has yielded greater pleasure and involvement in reading, improved comprehension, and better retention. Nevertheless, the process does involve a commitment of time and practice on the part of both teachers and students.

References

Bleich, D. (1978). Subjective criticism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chase, N. D., & Hynd, C. (1985, October). Reader response techniques for teaching college reading. Paper presented at the annual conference of the College Reading Association, Pittsburgh.

Fish, S. E. (1980). Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Iser, W. (1980). Interaction between text and reader. In S. Suleiman & I. Crosman (Eds.), The reader in the text. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). The reader, the text, the poem. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Master List
College Reading and Learning Assistance Technical Reports
Georgia State University

Technical Report No.	
84-01	Brozo, W. G., Schmelzer, R. V., & Spires, N. A. A Study of Test-Wiseness Clues in College/University Teacher-Made Tests with Implications for Academic Assistance Centers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 240-928)
84-02	Stahl, N. A., Brozo, W. G., & Henk, W. A. Evaluative Criteria for College Reading-Study Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 240-933)
84-03	Schmelzer, R. V., Brozo, W. G., & Stahl, N. A. Using a Learning Model to Integrate Study Skills into a Peer-Tutoring Program. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-244)
84-04	Brozo, W. G., & Stahl, N. A. Focusing on Standards: A Checklist for Rating Competencies of College Reading Specialists. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-762)
84-05	Stahl, N. A., Brozo, W. G., & Gordon, B. The Professional Preparation of College Reading and Study Skills Specialists. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-761)
84-06	Stahl, N. A., & Brozo, W. G. Vocabulary Instruction in Georgia's Postsecondary Reading Programs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-759)
84-07	King, J. R., Stahl, N. A., & Brozo, W. G. Integrating Study Skills and Orientation Courses. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-760)
84-08	Brozo, W. G., & Schmelzer, R. V. Faculty Perceptions of Student Behaviors: A Comparison of Two Universities. (Not submitted to ERIC--to appear in an upcoming edition of the Journal of College Student Personnel)

84-09 Henk, W. A., Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. The Readability of State Drivers' Manual. (Not submitted to ERIC--please refer to Transportation Quarterly, 38(4), 507-520.

84-10 Stahl, N. A., Henk, W. A., & King, J. R. Are Drivers' Manuals Right for Reluctant Readers? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 245-208)

85-01 Stahl, N. A., Hynd, C. R., & Henk, W. A. Avenues for Chronicling and Researching the History of College Reading and Study Skills Instruction. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-245)

85-02 Smith, B. D., & Elifson, J. M. Do Pictures Make a Difference in College Textbooks? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-246)

85-03 Brozo, W. G., Stahl, N. A., & Gordon, B. Training Effects of Summarizing, Item Writing, and Knowledge of Sources on Reading Test Performance. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-247)

85-04 Brozo, W. G. Teaching Students to Recognize and Manipulate Structures of Cohesion. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-248)

85-05 Henk, W. A., & Stahl, N. A. A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Notetaking on Learning from Lecture. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 258-533)

85-06 King, J. R. & Stahl, N.A. Training and Evaluating Notetaking. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-07 Chase, N. D. Reader Response Techniques for Teaching Secondary and Post-Secondary Reading. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-08 Hynd, C. R. & Alvermann, D. E. The Role of Refutation Text in Overcoming Difficulty with Science Concepts. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-09 Best, P. A. & Brozo, W. G. Current Research on Studying: A Qualitative Analysis. (ERIC Document Service No. Pending)

85-10 Stahl, N. A., Henk, W. A., Brozo, W. G., & Sickele, M. Developing Independent Learners: Strategies and Tactics for Mastery of Text (ERIC Document Service No. Pending)